

## **Boston University School of Medicine Department of Medicine - Exit Interview Manual**

### Objective

Increasing faculty retention is a goal in the Department of Medicine's strategic plan. Exit interviews allow the Department to learn the main reasons why a faculty member leaves the institution. From the patterns identified in the interview, the Faculty Development and Diversity program can develop programs that address shortcoming and bolster strengths.

### Design of interview protocol

The Vice Chair and Director of Faculty Development and Diversity reviewed exit procedures at Boston University and other academic medical centers. They also conducted a literature review to find articles related to faculty departures. Although no quantitative studies demonstrate the effectiveness of exit interviews in reducing attrition, published reports reveal several common reasons for a faculty member in academic medicine to leave an institution:

- Better opportunity or position at another institution
- Desire for shift in responsibilities or schedule
- Accompany spouse to another location
- Inadequate mentoring
- Lack of collegiality or intellectual support
- Strained relationship with supervisor
- Insufficient resources or intrusive bureaucracy
- Too low compensation

The Director of Faculty Development and Diversity developed an interview protocol that seeks to capture respondents' experiences with the categories identified in the literature.

### Logistics

The Chief Administrative Officer notifies the Director of Faculty Development and Diversity when she receives a resignation or termination letter. He then contacts the faculty member by e-mail, inviting him or her to a confidential interview. These usually last about 30 minutes and take place in the Director's office, the faculty member's office, or over the telephone.

### Interview

The interview follows a semi-structured format so that the questioner may deviate from the script to follow a new line of conversation or eliminate a topic that has already been answered. The interview focuses on three main areas:

#### **Decision to leave**

- Does your new position offer anything that BU does not?
- What were the most important reasons that influenced your decision to leave BU?
- Did the DOM or section make any effort to retain you?
- What was the nature of the retention effort?
- How could the retention effort have been more helpful in retaining you?
- What lessons from BU will you take to your new job?

#### **Experience at BU**

- What were some factors that facilitated your ability to achieve your goals? Obstacles?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of your relationship with your direct supervisor?
- How were the expectations of your performance made known to you?
- Did you experience harassment or discrimination?

#### **Recommendations**

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- What do you value about BU/BMC? What will you miss?
- Would you recommend BU/BMC as a good place to work to your professional colleagues?
- What advice would you give to your replacement?
- How can we improve DOM faculty development and diversity programs to enhance faculty's success in meeting their professional goals?
- Do you have any other suggestions regarding how we might improve the department?

### Evaluation

Once a year the Faculty Development and Diversity Committee will review the exit interview process and interview protocol and provide feedback for continued relevance. In addition, the Director of Faculty Development and Diversity will contact two interviewed faculty members a year after their departure to ask them to reflect on the exit process.

### Presentation of data

After every 10-12 interviews, the Director of Faculty Development and Diversity prepares a summary report for the Chair of the Department of Medicine and the Vice Chair for Faculty Development and Diversity. The report contains the sex and track of the faculty members interviewed as well as their tabulated responses. Selected quotes illustrate each of the main patterns detected.

The Chair and Vice Chair meet with the Director to discuss the report. They can then choose to share relevant findings with other departmental leaders. They will also use the reports to develop future strategic goals and faculty development programs.

### References

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- Levine RB, Lin F, Kern DE, Wright SM, Carrese J. Stories From Early-Career Women Physicians Who Have Left Academic Medicine: A Qualitative Study at a Single Institution. *Academic Medicine.* 2011;86(6):752-8.